

Existing law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) as a program of merit scholarships (TOPS-Tech, Opportunity, Performance, and Honors awards) for first-time freshman who meet a specified GPA, ACT/SAT score, and core curriculum requirements, and certain other qualifications to attend La. public postsecondary institutions, regionally accredited independent colleges and universities in La., or certain out-of-state nonpublic postsecondary institutions.

#### Initial Eligibility

Existing law requires that a student enroll in an eligible college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the first anniversary of the date that the student graduated from an eligible high school or completed the 12th grade level of a BESE-approved home study program.

Existing law provides however that if the student joins the U.S. Armed Forces within one year after graduating from high school, the student must enroll in an eligible college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the fifth anniversary of the date of high school graduation or completion of the home study program.

New law additionally provides (effective beginning with the 1996-1997 school year) that if, on or prior to the fifth anniversary of high school graduation or completion of the home study program, the student reenlists in the U.S. Armed Forces and maintains continuous active duty, the five-year period shall be extended to the semester immediately following the one-year anniversary of the student's separation from active duty service.

#### Maintain Continuing Eligibility

Existing law provides that, once enrolled in college, if a student fails to maintain the cumulative GPA required for continuation in the program or fails to make steady academic progress, such student becomes ineligible for further TOPS payments. Further provides that certain payments may be reinstated upon attainment of the required GPA, provided that the student has maintained other continuation requirements and the period of ineligibility did not persist for more than two years. For a TOPS-Tech Award, provides that payments may be reinstated upon attainment of the required GPA, provided that the student has maintained other continuation requirements and the period of ineligibility did not persist for more than one year.

Existing law provides that if such period of ineligibility is interrupted due to a student's active duty service in the U.S. Armed Forces, the period will be extended for a length of time equal to the student's active duty service, not to exceed four years.

New law extends the four-year length of time for a student who is on active duty if the student reenlists in the U.S. Armed Forces and maintains continuous active duty. In such case, the period will be extended for a length of time equal to the student's active duty service.

Effective upon signature of governor (May 22, 2012).

(Amends R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(b)(i), (c)(i), (d)(i), and (4)(a)(iii), (B)(3)(a), (P)(1)(c), (2)(b), (3)(b), and (4)(b), (Q)(1)(d), and (V)(1)(c))